



SECONDER'S SPEECH

REPORT OF THE JOINT COMMITTEE ON FOOD, AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES (FANR) AND TRADE, INDUSTRY, FINANCE AND INVESTMENT (TIFI)

Mr President, I rise to second the motion on the floor moved ably by the Chairperson of the Standing Committee on Food Agriculture and Natural Resources (FANR) that the House do adopt the Report of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources and Trade, Industry, Finance and Investment.

Mr President, although most SADC Member states are at different stages of development, evidently, agriculture sustains many households and employs almost half of the total population of the region. Interestingly, many of these households are female headed. However, food security in the SADC region continues to be threatened by many factors such as unpredictable weather conditions and climate change as well as external shocks, including unforeseen events such as the Covid-19 and Ukraine War. These factors amplify the vulnerability of our food system in the SADC region.

Sir, there is, therefore, a strong need to transform food production to achieve desirable agricultural outcomes and maximise nutritional value in a more sustainable way. Our agricultural sector must be one where farmers adapt and build resilience to the increasing challenges from climate change.

Mr President, agroecology is one such method that offers many solutions to addressing food and nutritional challenges affecting the region. Unlike conventional methods of farming, agroecology remains key in advancing food sovereignty, building resilient ecosystems and communities, promoting of nutrition and health, especially among the poor.

Sadly, the agricultural sector is often underfunded, and there is immense potential to unlock the stated benefits. In addition, there has been inadequate investment in the sector which has limited the capacity of many potential farmers to transform agricultural systems. This inadequate investment is worsened by stringent conditions in accessing financing for agroecological production, especially for small holder farmers. In response to these challenges, there is need for increased and targeted support to help those most affected by climate change, particularly small holder farmers and others who depend on agroecological production.

Mr President, this current status leaves governments with no option but to increase investment in agroecology in order to improve not only the quantity but more importantly the quality of the food basket.

In view of the foregoing, Mr President I therefore wish to join the mover in urging SADC Members States to prioritise funding to the agriculture sector and particularly agroecology. Increased investment will contribute to improved and sustained performance of the agriculture sector and ensure a food secure SADC region. Without deliberate efforts to invest in agroecology for better yield, the SADC region will continue to witness economies having to import additional food to meet their food deficits.

Further, Parliaments remain relevant not only in ensuring increased budgetary allocation towards agroecology and accountability, but also promote private sector investment through legislation and its enforcement.

Mr President, let me hasten to state that choosing agroecology over industrial agriculture is not only climate smart but cuts across many Sustainable Development Goals relating to nutrition, poverty, and gender, particularly

- Goal 1: No Poverty.
- Goal 2: Zero Hunger.
- Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being
- Gender Equality
- And more fundamentally Goal 13 on climate action.

Therefore, increased investment in agroecology drives the region miles further towards attainment of Sustainable Development Goals in an environmentally sustainable manner

With these few remarks, Mr President, I second the motion.